



## *Florida House of Representatives*

### Democratic Office

*Franklin Sands*  
*Democratic Leader*

*Geraldine F. Thompson*  
*Democratic Leader Pro Tempore*

January 23, 2009

Dear Members of the House Democratic Caucus,

I write to express my extreme pride in the performance of our House Democratic Caucus during the special session, and to encourage your continued stellar service for the people amid these days of economic uncertainty and change.

As a caucus, we are showing the people – especially the vulnerable, the middle class, the working poor, and good corporate citizens -- that we are willing to fight on their behalf. We are proving in both words and actions that we will neither yield from our convictions nor cower under the oppressive tactics of the majority party.

But our work has only begun. And today, our mission can be no clearer:

- We will do what's right for the people.
- We will tell them the truth, and
- We will give them hope.

In a speech earlier this week at the Associated Press legislative planning forum in Tallahassee, I called for dramatic change to restore public confidence in their state government.

I urged Republican leaders to conduct the people's business in a more open manner, and with more involvement from key stakeholders as we examine state spending. I raised the specter of revising our tax structure to make it a fairer system. And I called on Governor Charlie Crist to exercise his veto pen to undo some of the most onerous budget cuts, including ones we opposed during special session.

I find it interesting that some Republican legislative leaders are now acknowledging that

there may be the need for revenue increases to balance the state's budget.

But where I think we differ with the Republicans is over the matter of who should bear the brunt of cuts and how the state should pay for the services that people need and support.

So, where do we stand? We care about the middle class. In the Democratic caucus, some of us have warned, because of failed Republican economic policies, of the possible need for revenue increases to compensate for the drastic revenue losses. But even in making these acknowledgements, I remind you that, as Democrats, we continue to back ideas that seek to protect the middle class and low-wage earners. That's not necessarily the case with some of the proposals being offered by Republican leaders.

So, as we prepare for difficult decisions in regular session, I want you to know that I will work with each of you---senior members and newly elected legislators alike---on the priorities of our caucus. I also will do all that I can to help you with your individual needs and unique constituencies throughout our diverse state.

You can expect frequent communiqués along the lines of this letter and other memorandums throughout my tenure as your leader. I seek and deeply appreciate your involvement, and I suspect that it will be helpful for you to have my perspective on the decisions that we will make as a caucus.

If we fight together, as we did during special session, we can set a new tone for the House of Representatives. We will show the people that there are good reasons why we should be in the majority and that we deserve to be in the front rows of the House chamber.

After all, the people aren't happy with the direction of the state under Republican control. And why should they? Today's news is sobering. Florida's jobless rate is 8.1 percent. That means 1 in 12 Florida workers was out of a job in December. These numbers highlight the need for a new direction for the state that our caucus can help set.

As Democrats, and as Americans, we celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. We know that he will show leadership that also will help drive our agenda and aide our cause. But we can't be complacent. We also share in the responsibility of fighting for just causes: including the need for more economic opportunity and jobs for the people of Florida.

If you have any concerns or questions, feel free to contact me at (954) 260-6292. Thank your service to our great state.

Respectfully,

Franklin Sands